

USAID ENVIRONMENT CENTER



GUIDE TO ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY INPUT AND REVIEW

Introduction

Environmental problems can directly cause or exacerbate poverty, social instability, disease, and conflicts over resources. The U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Environment Center leads the way in environmental analysis and helps coordinate environmental programs that directly confront these threats while supporting Agency-wide objectives for economic growth, global health, and conflict prevention.

As stated in its [Strategic Plan](#), the Center's mandate is to ***“provide technical and programmatic leadership and support to the U.S. Agency for International Development, its country programs, and its domestic and international development partners in addressing global environment and sustainable development problems.”*** In addition, ***“the Center's primary function is to support the environmentally-related efforts of USAID's country programs”*** through ***“technical assistance, information, and training in the conceptualization, design, programming, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the Agency's environmental activities.”***

In line with its mandate and the role outlined for the Global Bureau in [ADS 200](#) (ADS 200.2.f.) and [ADS 201](#) (201.2), the Center provides technical and programmatic leadership and support for environmental issues to Missions for strategic planning, development, and review. Consequently, the Center has developed these guidelines—outlining Agency requirements and guidelines for Missions in addressing environmental issues during strategic planning, and the Center's role in Mission strategy development and review.

The Center, led by its Regional Coordinators, works with Missions throughout the strategic planning cycle, including:

- Assisting in strategic analysis and planning
- Reviewing concept papers
- Reviewing strategic plans
- Mid-term reviews of strategic plans
- Reviewing new environment/natural resource management Strategic Objectives (SO) proposed as additions to Mission strategic plans

Missions are welcome to access the Center's services at any point during the strategic planning cycle. Given its robust technical expertise, management capability, and past experience, the Center is well suited to the task of assisting Missions in examining potential or existing environmental issues prior to the development of strategies, “programming-in” environment into strategies, developing environmental SOs, and ensuring that strategies meet Agency requirements for environmental analysis. Mission personnel are encouraged to contact the Center's regional coordinators ([Russ Backus](#) for Africa, ANE, and E&E; and [John Matuszak](#) for LAC) for assistance.

Purpose

This document outlines Agency guidelines and requirements to help ensure that USAID Missions thoroughly and effectively examine environmental issues, and incorporate—as appropriate—findings during the strategic planning process. Accordingly, the document is organized as follows:

- Part 1 details Agency requirements and guidelines for Missions in addressing environmental issues during strategic planning
 - Part 2 outlines the Center’s role in Mission strategy development and review
 - Annex I contains a Strategic Planning summary checklist
 - Annex II contains summary data and website links that may be useful to both Mission and Center staff during the strategy development and review cycle
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Part 1 AGENCY REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDANCE FOR MISSION ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

Overview

Experience clearly demonstrates that sound strategies rely on careful analyses of challenges, opportunities and trends. A careful analysis of environmental issues is particularly important: Due in part to their pervasive and cross-cutting nature, they can jeopardize easily prospects for promoting sustainable development. Recognizing this, the Agency—as outlined in [ADS 201.3.4.11](#)—requires that Missions examine environmental issues *prior* to the development of strategic planning documents, with findings incorporated into these documents as appropriate.

1. Technical Analysis Requirements

1.1 Importance of Technical Analyses

As [ADS 201.3.4.11.a](#) explains, the purpose of analysis is to inform the strategy development process: *“Analysis enables Operating Units and SO Teams to examine the feasibility of various aspects of proposed Strategic Plans. It helps planners determine whether the objectives and intended results are appropriate, whether the tactics to achieve objectives and results are the most suitable and cost effective, and whether the plan can be implemented in the time frame proposed and with the available resources. Analysis provides the basis for defining the development hypothesis represented in Results Frameworks as well as critical assumptions that are beyond USAID or partner control.”* Therefore, analysis is to be conducted *“before or during the development of the strategy rather than as a separate task after the planning process is complete.”*

1.2 Inclusion of Technical Analyses in Strategic Planning Documents

Summaries of all relevant analyses must be included in strategy documents. According to [ADS 201.3.4.11.b](#), *“This summary, which may be included in the main text or in an annex to the strategy document, must cover analyses conducted by the Operating Unit for purposes of strategy development...This summary should be limited to a brief overview of the analysis, a description of the methodology used to conduct the analysis, and the conclusions drawn.”* This is required so that the *“reader [can] form an independent judgment regarding the adequacy of the analysis, as well as the validity and relevance of the conclusions to the strategy or plan.”* The importance of thorough analyses is underscored by the fact that, as [ADS 201.3.4.11](#) explains, *“Evidence of sound analysis will be a factor in plan approval.”*

1.3 Required Environment Sector Analysis

As required in [ADS 201.3.4.11.b](#), Missions must conduct an environmental assessment that covers, *at a minimum*, the state of the host country’s biodiversity and tropical forest resources. These requirements cannot be waived, and they must be met *each time* a new Strategy is developed. Accordingly, if these sector analyses are inadequate, approval of Mission strategy documents can be delayed until they are completed, and the results are considered together with other analytical work and incorporated into the Mission’s strategy. It is also important to note that these sector assessments must be completed

prior to making strategy decisions so that results can be included, as appropriate, in the overall decision-making process. As [ADS 201.3.4.11.b](#) explains, the Foreign Assistance Act (Section 118(e) and 119(d)), requires that these assessments include:¹

- A concise evaluation of the countrywide status of biodiversity and tropical forest resources, focusing on management issues and required actions for conservation
- A determination as to the extent to which these required actions for conservation are satisfied by the current or proposed Mission programs

As a result of these analyses, Missions should consider whether:

- The state of the sub-sectors warrants inclusion as an SO, or SpO
- Needs can be suitably met as an IR to another sector SO

These analyses are required even in the case of medium-term, transition, or interim strategies (up to 3 years). The Center, working in coordination with the appropriate Regional Bureau, should consider the extent of the analyses (i.e., minimum information requirements) needed in highly volatile or crisis countries, where mid-term or interim plans are appropriate due to crisis situations, or where long-term planning is otherwise precluded.²

To assist Missions in complying with FAA 118(e) and FAA 119(d) requirements, the Agency has developed guidance entitled, “[Guidance for Preparation of Background Assessments on Biological Diversity and Tropical Forests](#).”

REQUIRED TROPICAL FOREST AND BIODIVERSITY ANALYSES

[FAA 118\(e\)](#)

“Each country development strategy statement or other country plan prepared by the Agency for International Development shall include an analysis of -- 1) the actions necessary in that country to achieve conservation and sustainable management of tropical forests, and (2) the extent to which the actions proposed for support by the Agency meet the needs thus identified.”

[FAA 119\(d\)](#)

“Each country development strategy statement or other country plan prepared by the Agency for International Development shall include an analysis of -- 1) the actions necessary in that country to conserve biological diversity, and 2) the extent to which the actions proposed for support by the Agency meet the needs thus identified.”

1.4 Benefits of Comprehensive Environmental Analyses

[ADS 201.3.4.11.b](#) further indicates that while not required, Missions “*can save time and be more efficient by including all aspects of [the] environment when undertaking the mandatory biodiversity and tropical forestry work.*” By taking into account the

¹ In the process of conducting these analyses, Missions should consider not only the factors listed above, but also ongoing work by other organizations.

² Although the context of the situation may dictate the extent of the analyses that may be conducted, Missions should be aware that FAA 118(e) and 119(d) analyses should be proportional to other analyses conducted.

environment as a whole, while performing required biodiversity and tropical forestry analyses, Missions should realize benefits in implementation efficiency as well as attainment of program goals. For example, a comprehensive assessment of a host-country's environment may result in the development of environmental SOs, allow Missions to find linkages and realize synergies between other sector SOs, and help avoid costly delays in the implementation stage as early consideration of environmental impacts is dealt with proactively.

In addition, Missions should consider environmental factors as part of a comprehensive assessment of other sectors. As [ADS 201.3.4.11c](#) explains, “*Analyses are often interdependent. For example, an agricultural sector analysis may also include gender as well as environmental analysis, thus approaching the sector from a more holistic point of view.*”

2. Agency Guidance for Strategic Plans

2.1 Guidelines for Strategic Plans

The Agency has developed a guidance document, [Guidelines for Strategic Plans](#) (listed in [ADS 201.3.4.11d](#) as a help reference), to assist Missions in the development of their strategies. The environment is one of several key factors (along with population and health, democracy, economic growth, and humanitarian assistance) singled out as worthy of special attention in the document. As [Guidelines](#) notes, strategies, should “*be based on a comprehensive assessment of environmental threats and opportunities...*”

Further, [Guidelines](#) makes clear that “*where key factors suggest a serious development constraint, the presumption is that [strategies] must show how USAID will help address them, absent a compelling argument to the contrary.*” According to the document, the presence of any of the following problems indicates severe environmental degradation, and calls for serious attention in terms of addressing the root causes of the problems in strategic planning documents.

- Quantifiable losses in GDP of 5 percent or more due to natural resource depletion and/or pollution.
- Rapid rate of degradation (for example, 1 percent) of key ecosystems, including deforestation, conversion of wetlands, loss of coral reefs, and conversion of savannah
- Unacceptable environmental health risks

Finally, as [Guidelines](#) makes clear, assessments should not only address the key environmental factors noted above, but also should “*be based on a comprehensive assessment of environmental threats and opportunities*” and, “*where feasible and appropriate, include targeted research to improve empirical understanding of [environmental] factors.*”

PART 2 THE CENTER'S ROLE IN MISSION STRATEGIC PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

Overview

In line with its mandate and the role outlined for the Global Bureau in [ADS 200](#) and [ADS 201](#), the Center is responsible, in close coordination with the appropriate Regional Bureau, for providing technical assistance to Missions during strategy planning and development, and as part of a larger group, for approving Mission strategic plans.

1. The Center's Role in Mission Strategic Planning

1.1 Advancing the Knowledge Base and Sectoral Leadership

As outlined in [ADS 200.2 f](#), the Center, along with the rest of the Bureau for Global Programs (G), is responsible for playing *“a lead role in advancing technical knowledge,”* and for *“disseminating research findings and lessons learned”* about the environment. In addition, as detailed in [ADS 201](#), *“G and BHR have primary responsibility for defining specific sectoral approaches”* that *“reflect best practice and are used to guide [Mission] strategic planning.”*

1.2 Parameter Setting

According to [ADS 201.3.3.5](#), *“Parameter setting defines the boundaries within which individual Operating Unit Strategic Plans are developed.”* The end product of this process is *“a cable or formal memorandum from the Bureau to the [Mission],”* which must be included as *“a mandatory annex to the Strategic Plan.”* In turn, Missions are *“responsible for ensuring that the strategy proposal is responsive to the parameters”* set forth in the cable or formal memorandum. As [ADS 201.3.3.5](#) explains, these parameters must include *“identification of any specific technical analysis or assessments that reviewers and the Operating Unit agree must be conducted to support or justify the choice of objectives (beyond those mandatory items identified in section 201.3.4.11) and the resources or staff that will be available to complete this analysis. (See 201.3.4.11)”*

According to [ADS 201.3.3.5](#), *“The parameter setting process must provide opportunities for broad consultation among Bureaus in the Agency,”* including G, *“if the Operating Unit is in a Regional Bureau...(to identify potential technical issues or country/region needs that may influence choice of objectives).”* Thus, the Center should work with the appropriate Regional Bureau to help Missions with any country-specific or regional environmental issues. As [ADS 201.3.3.5](#) explains, this close involvement during the parameter setting process is critical to *“reduce uncertainty in the approval process and improve clarity in guiding the development of [the] strategy.”*³

³ The Center's involvement is especially important in cases where Missions choose to develop a concept paper and/or specific preliminary technical analyses in conjunction with the parameter setting process.

1.3 Environmental Analysis

[ADS 201.3.4.11c](#) explains that, “[Missions] and relevant Bureaus are responsible for verifying that sufficient technical analysis has been completed and is referenced in the strategy document to support the proposed strategy.” It further states that the “issuance of a management agreement confirms that the proposed strategy meets the analytical requirements.” The Center should work closely with Missions, in coordination with the appropriate Regional Bureau, during the development of strategies to ensure that all environmental analysis requirements are met⁴, and so that Missions may draw upon the Center’s expertise and capabilities when conducting these analyses. This support is important, as Missions may not have the capacity to conduct the sort of analysis they want or that is required. As [ADS 201.3.4.11c](#) explains, “*Common to each specialized analysis is the need to determine at the outset what kind of information is needed and in what detail, keeping in mind costs and the time required.*”

Accordingly, if these sector analyses are not adequate, approval of Mission strategy documents can be delayed until they are completed, and the results are considered together with other analytical work and incorporated into the Mission’s strategy.

1.4 The Center’s Role in Washington Review and Approval of Strategic Plans

The Center, as part of the Global Bureau, participates in the review and approval of strategic plans. According to [ADS 201.3.4.15](#), G must review Strategic Plans for bilateral and regional programs, as part of a “*a collaborative process that elicits Agency-wide participation.*”

Missions are encouraged to contact the Center’s regional coordinators ([Russ Backus](#) for Africa, ANE, and E&E; and [John Matuszak](#) for LAC) prior to the development of any strategy in order to benefit from the Center’s early involvement. This involvement by the Center early on in the strategy development and review cycle is critical in order to ensure that:

- Missions are made aware of any country-specific or regional environmental issues, or regional programs that may impact their strategies
- Environmental issues are thoroughly examined in order to benefit from linkages and realize synergies with other sectors prior to development of SOs
- All requirements for environmental analyses are met so as to avoid delays in the strategy review, approval, and implementation

⁴ Part 1 of this document outlines Agency requirements and guidelines with respect to environmental analysis.

ANNEX I

Strategic Planning and Review Summary Checklist

Agency Guidance ⁵	Specific Guidance	Date Completed
Comprehensive Assessment of Environmental Threats and Opportunities	>= 5% loss in GDP due to natural resource depletion and/or pollution	
	>= 1% loss of key ecosystems, including deforestation, conversion of wetlands, loss of coral reefs, and conversion of savannah	
	Determine if there are unacceptable environmental health risks	
Agency Directives ⁶	Specific Requirements	Date Completed
Strategic Planning Development	Set parameters – identify any specific analysis or assessments that reviewers and the Operating Unit agree must be conducted to support or justify objectives	
	Environmental analysis – verify that sufficient analysis has been completed and is included (either in main text, or as an annex) in the strategy document	
Center Mandate/Response	Specific Recommendations	Date Completed
USAID/G/ENV Environmental Technical Assistance	Environment Center – make certain that the Center is involved early in the strategy development process. The Center can ensure that Operating Units are made aware of any regional environmental issues, those issues are examined, and all requirements for environmental analysis are met	

⁵ Specific guidance criteria for Agency Strategic Plans as set forth in ADS 201.3.4.11d, refer to pg. 5

⁶ Specific requirements to support the selection of objectives and supporting technical analysis as set forth in ADS 201.3.35 and ADS 301.3.4.11c respectively, refer to pgs. 6-7

ANNEX II

Website Links for Further Information

The purpose of this Annex is to serve as a launching point for obtaining additional information that may be useful during the Mission strategy development cycle. The information listed below is divided into eight categories: 1) Agency guidance, 2) Agency websites, 3) Agency funded websites, 4) Other U.S. government websites, 5) Other donor websites, 6) International conventions, 7) United Nations System websites, and 8) NGO websites.

1. Agency Guidance on Strategy Development

Internal Mandatory References ⁷	
Goal Area: Environment & Energy Link to Strategic Plan	Energy
	Environment Strategy
	Guidance on Complying with the Knollenberg Amendment for Climate Change-Related Programs
Additional Help References	
Goal Area: Environment & Energy Link to Strategic Plan	Domestic Water and Sanitation
	Environment and Natural Resources
	Environmental Strategy
	Guidance for Preparation of Background Assessments on Biological Diversity and Tropical Forest for Use in CDSS or Other Country Plans, ADAC Cable
	Initial Environmental Examination
	Making Cities Work: USAID's Urban Strategy
	PD #6 – Environmental and Natural Resource Aspects of Development Assistance
	PD #7 – Forestry Policy and Programs
	PPC Summary Description of FAA sections 118(e) and 119(d) Requirements for Preparing Strategic Plans
	Shelter
	Urban Development Policy

⁷ All Internal Mandatory and Additional help references excluding “Making Cities Work,” can be found in alphabetical order on USAID’s ADS Series 200 Programming Policy website, <http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/ads/200/refindx2.html>.

Additional Help References Cont'd	
<p>Goal Area: Cross-Cutting Issues</p> <p>Link to Strategic Plan</p>	<p>USAID's Strategy for Sustainable Development</p>

2. Agency Websites

- [USAID Missions](#) contains links to all USAID Missions
- [R4](#) page maintained by the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) has downloadable R4s from 1998 – present, and Strategic Plans for every mission
- [DEC](#) allows the user to search for information about USAID projects by 1) subject 2) category, 3) country/region, and 4) date

3. Agency Funded Environmental Websites

- [FRAME](#) contains up-to-date information on environmental and natural resource issues, as they relate to the challenge of promoting sustainable development in Africa. The links and references on this site are “prepared by professionals in Africa and elsewhere,” and encompass a “web gateway to analytical tools and information for ENR issues.”
- [NRM Tracker](#) contains information about local initiatives in Africa to improve the management of natural resources and the livelihood of those who benefit from them. The purpose of the NRM Tracker is to facilitate information capture and sharing among those interested in improving resource management through work with local communities.

4. Other U.S. Agency Websites

- [World Factbook](#) by the Central Intelligence Agency contains a concise information “snapshot” about every country in the world

5. Other Donors

- World Bank
 - [World Bank](#) site contains useful information about the activities of this donor in over 100 countries – indexed by country
 - [World Bank](#) site contains information about this donor’s strategies for assistance in more than 100 countries – indexed by type of approach

6. International Conventions

- [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) (CBD)
- [Convention to Combat Desertification](#) (CCD)
- [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC)
- [Convention on International Trade in endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora](#) (CITES)
- [Convention on Migratory Species](#)
- [Basil Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal](#)
- [Prior Informed Consent \(PIC\) Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade](#) (Rotterdam Convention)
- Montreal Protocol
 - [UNEP Ozone Secretariat](#)
 - [World Bank](#)
- [Ramsar Convention on Wetlands](#)
- [Convention on the Law on Non-navigable Uses of International Watercourses](#)
- [Convention on the Law of the Sea](#)
- [Regional Seas Action Programs](#)
- [International Tropical Timber Organization](#)

7. U.N. System

- [UNCSD](#) (Commission on Sustainable Development, or CSD) has information about national implementation of the Earth Summit commitments, plus five year (Rio+5) progress reports
- [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO) is one of the largest specialized agencies in the United Nations system and the lead agency for agriculture, forestry, fisheries and rural development
- [Global Environment Facility](#) (GEF) contains an overview of activities in countries around the world in areas like biodiversity, climate change, and cross-sector
- [GEF](#) has specific information on National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans for many countries

8. NGOs

- [World Conservation Union](#) (IUCN), encourages and assists societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature, while also seeking to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable
- [World Resources Institute](#) (WRI) contains Environmental Strategies, Action Plans, and Assessments
- [Conservation International](#) (CI) has information about efforts to conserve biodiversity around the world.